

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 27 JANUARY  
2009**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Blackmore (Chairman) and Butler, Chittenden, Daley, Field, Mrs Gooch, Hinder, Verrall and Yates.

**APOLOGIES:** There were no apologies.

**90. Web- Casting**

**Resolved:** That all items on the agenda be web-cast

**91. Notification of Substitute Members**

There were no substitute Members.

**92. Notification of Visiting Members**

There were no visiting Members.

**93. Disclosures by Members and Officers**

There were none.

**94. Exempt Items**

**Resolved:** That all items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

**95. Minutes**

Councillor Daley requested that the minutes be amended to include his apologies.

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 December 2008 be agreed as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman subject to the inclusion of Councillor Daley's apologies.

**96. Recycling**

The Chairman welcomed the Waste Collection Officer, Mr David Campbell-Lenaghan to the meeting. The Committee received an introduction regarding the current recycling issues, and discussed the following topics:

- The impact of the economic downturn on recycling. Kent had seen a five percent reduction on last year's total volume of

waste. It was thought that part of this reduction could be attributed to people not buying surplus to requirements in response to the economic uncertainty;

- The income from the bulky waste collections. This was being closely monitored as it was expected that demand for this service would also fall due to the economic downturn;
- The weekend freighter service. It was noted that the service was not being withdrawn, but rather reviewed to improve efficiency. Consultation with affected Ward Members and Parish Councils would be undertaken. Members requested that the Committee receive a report on the freighter service. It was agreed that this should be received at the Committee meeting on 24 February 2009 to inform Members prior to the 2009/10 budget being considered at Full Council;
- Recycling and re-using items collected on the freighter and bulky waste service. Household waste could contaminate recyclable or reusable items on the freighter service and the freighter service review would consider ways to prevent this;
- The impact of lower demand from international recycling markets. Kent County Council held the contract for disposing of recyclables collected at the kerbside in Maidstone. The majority of these recyclables were processed in the United Kingdom and therefore international markets had had little impact;
- The bring-site recycling provision would be reviewed following the full implementation of the kerbside recycling scheme, including the feasibility of small electrical bring-site collections. Members also suggested considering the benefits of a reward scheme. Members were advised that recycling separated glass from bring-sites was favoured, as this was more environmentally sustainable than recycling from the mixed glass collected at the kerbside. The Committee noted that Maidstone Borough Council was responsible for disposing of bring-site recyclables;
- The Council's recycling performance. Maidstone was predicted to achieve a rate of 27.5 percent of recycled or composted waste in 2008/09, despite the implementation of phase 2 and 3 of the kerbside recycling scheme being deferred from October 2008 to March and May 2009;
- The implementation of the recycling scheme. The Committee considered the storage of the new recycling bins prior to their distribution and the consultation undertaken with residents with regard to the number and types of recycling receptacles at each property;
- The action plan of the Kent Waste Partnership. The partnership would provide a targeted recycling campaign by doorstep contractors in Maidstone, in addition to providing support at public events. Information would be provided on contamination and electrical disposal. Community groups were also being encouraged to apply for a community action fund from the Kent Waste Partnership to help promote recycling or composting in Kent;
- Enhancing the clinical waste service. Demand for the service had increased and it was hoped that joint working with other

Districts could secure a site in Maidstone to enable the number of collections made in each week to be increased;

- Food and garden waste collections. The environmental benefits of recycling green waste in Essex had been found to outweigh the environmental impact of transporting it there. However, a feasibility study of a food waste collection service was being undertaken, together with considering the viability of recycling food and garden waste at Blaise Farm; and
- The commissioning of the Allington Incinerator. Members were informed that residual waste from Maidstone had been sent there since January 2009. The Committee noted the capacity of the incinerator and requested a tour of the facilities.

The Chairman thanked Mr Campbell-Lenaghan for an informative presentation.

The Web cast from this session is available at <http://clients.westminster-digital.co.uk/maidstone/archive.aspx> (00.04.00 to 01.31.00).

**Resolved: That**

- a) The Waste Collection Officer provide a report on the Weekend Freighter Service to the Committee on 24 February 2009; and
- b) The Committee tour the Allington Incinerator and receive a presentation on its workings.

The meeting was adjourned from 8.01pm to 8.05pm.

**97. Public Conveniences Review**

The Committee welcomed the Street Scene Manager, Mr David Hitchings to their meeting. Following a brief introduction from Mr Hitchings outlining the findings of Street Scene's review of public conveniences, the Committee discussed the following:

- Low usage of public conveniences in rural and urban areas. Members felt these facilities would be more widely used in the summer and therefore further consultation with parish councils would be useful;
- Justification of public conveniences. Public conveniences received a large proportion of the non-statutory service budget. Members felt that they were poorly equipped and positioned and given the low usage figures, it was hard to justify the cost of the service. Members therefore felt that a dynamic approach was required to achieve an efficient and well used service;
- Members felt that the majority of the existing public conveniences locations were not ideal;
- Parish Councils had generally been reluctant to manage public conveniences but would do so to prevent closures. It was anticipated that a local cleaner could be used in rural areas to reduce costs and carbon footprints;

- Inadequate signposting. Re-branding of public convenience's signs had taken place and new sign posts could be erected quickly;
- Town centre public conveniences. Members were informed that:
  - The Church Street public conveniences lease ended in 2012;
  - The possible implications on the Palace Avenue car park and public conveniences site of the All Saints Link Road construction; and
  - The Fairmeadow public conveniences were being reviewed as part of the regeneration of the lower end of the high street.

The Committee therefore felt that it would be hard to justify costly refurbishments at these sites; and

- The benefits and disadvantages of charging for public conveniences. It was predicted that this could lead to a 40% reduction in usage.

The Committee agreed that the following recommendations be included in its final report:

- That all public conveniences, Council owned and otherwise, be sufficiently signposted to;
- That the Council pursue a community-based public convenience scheme and lead on this scheme by making available public conveniences at the museum and in the Gateway;
- The Church Street public conveniences be closed and the Gateway public conveniences be publicised;
- That poorly used public conveniences be phased out following the implementation of a community toilet scheme;
- Parish Councils be consulted with regard to part time or seasonal opening of public conveniences in rural areas, to identify periods of demand;
- The public conveniences in Parkwood and Shepway be closed given their low usage and cost. It was also felt that the customers using these public conveniences would live in close proximity and these were therefore not needed;
- That ideally the Town Centre required three well positioned public conveniences at the top, bottom and middle of high street;
- That the Cabinet Member ensure public conveniences were incorporated into the town centre improvement plans; and
- That the savings made from closures be used to refurbish and improve the park public convenience offer.

The Chairman thanked Mr Hitchings for an informative report.

The Web cast from this session is available at <http://clients.westminster-digital.co.uk/maidstone/archive.aspx> (01.35.15 to 02.04.45).

**Resolved: That**

- a) The evidence of the Street Scene Manager be included in the Committee's review of public conveniences; and
- b) The Cabinet Member for Regeneration ensure that the public convenience offer is considered as part of the town centre improvement plans; and
- c) The following recommendations be included in the final report:
  - i. That all public conveniences, Council owned and otherwise, be sufficiently signposted to;
  - ii. That the Council pursue a community-based public convenience scheme and lead on this scheme by making available public conveniences at the museum and in the Gateway;
  - iii. The Church Street public conveniences be closed and the Gateway public conveniences be publicised;
  - iv. That poorly used public conveniences be phased out following the implementation of a community toilet scheme;
  - v. Parish Councils be consulted with regard to part time or seasonal opening of public conveniences in rural areas, to identify periods of demand;
  - vi. The public conveniences in Parkwood and Shepway be closed given their low usage and cost. ;
  - vii. That ideally the Town Centre required three well positioned public conveniences at the top, bottom and middle of high street;
  - viii. That the Cabinet Member ensure public conveniences were incorporated into the town centre improvement plans; and
  - ix. That the savings made from closures be used to refurbish and improve the park public convenience offer.

#### **98. Update from the Museum and Heritage Manager**

The Committee noted the written update from the Museums and Heritage Manager on the progress of the East Wing Development Project and future events. The Committee was delighted with the progress of the museum and requested that a letter be sent to Mr Lace and his staff to congratulate them for their achievements.

**Resolved:** That a letter be sent to Mr Lace and his staff to congratulate them for their achievements.

#### **99. Future Work Programme 2008-09**

Councillors Blackmore, Chittenden and Yates informed the Committee of the progress of the review of scrutiny reports and it was agreed that the topic of abandoned vehicles be added to the Committee's watching briefs. The Committee requested that a quarterly update be received on the number of abandoned vehicles following a reduction in the Council's budget for Operation Cubit.

The Committee noted the progress of the recommendations arising from the fly-tipping report and agreed that an update be received on litter enforcement. Members noted that they would be receiving a report on the freighter service at its meeting on 24 February and agreed to also request a litter enforcement update from the Environmental Enforcement Manager.

The Committee agreed to visit the Allington Incinerator and asked the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to arrange a tour of the site for its March meeting.

**Resolved: That**

- a) Abandoned Vehicles be added to the Committee's watching briefs;
- b) The Committee receive quarterly updates on abandoned vehicle numbers;
- c) The Committee receive a litter enforcement update at its meeting on 24 February 2009; and
- d) The Overview and Scrutiny Officer arrange a tour of the Allington Incinerator on 24 March 2009.

**100. Duration of the Meeting**

6.30pm to 9.35pm.